

WASHINGTON - A program that fights drug trafficking in designated regions throughout the U.S. named Rep. Steny Hoyer, D-Md., as its Legislator of the Year on Friday in Greenbelt.

The National High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas Association presented Hoyer with the honor after the congressman fought changes proposed by the Bush administration, as well as \$19 million in budget cuts.

Hoyer began a letter to the House Appropriations Committee that eventually gathered more than 80 signatures in opposition to the budget cuts and moving the association to the Department of Justice; a move that would have dismantled the program and eliminated state and local law enforcement from the process.

“For many communities, HIDTA is an integral part of keeping their streets safe from the torment of illegal drugs,” Hoyer said in a statement Friday. “The program’s proven results motivated many of us in this region to found the Washington-Baltimore HIDTA, recognizing that our local law enforcement agencies could benefit from the additional support that it would bring.”

The program was created in 1988, and the 12-county Washington-Baltimore region was designated a targeted area in 1994. The program works to reduce drug and weapons trafficking through law enforcement operations, drug treatment programs and prevention at the local, state and federal levels.